Deer Park PFAS Statement

Statement

Addressing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is one of EPA's top priorities and the agency is actively working through the Unified Command to address any PFAS contamination associated with the use of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) in response to the fire at the Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC) Deer Park facility near Houston, Texas. AFFF is an effective tool in fighting fires, though certain varieties of AFFF may contain PFAS chemicals. PFAS is a group of man-made chemicals that have been widely used in everyday products since the 1940s and as such can be found in the environment. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

As part of EPA's response efforts, the agency is taking the following steps to address PFAS:

- First, EPA is working with ITC and first responders through the Unified Command to collect information about the different types of foams that were used to fight the fire. This information will be made public as soon as possible and will help the agency further refine its efforts to sample for and address any PFAS contamination in the area.
- Second, on March 21st, the day after the fire was initially extinguished, EPA began monitoring surface water for PFAS (including PFOA and PFOS) in both Tucker Bayou and Buffalo Bayou. The agency expects to receive and make public the first round of sampling results in the coming days.
- Third, EPA, through an Administrator Order issued on March 23, has required ITC to conduct surface water sampling for contaminants, including PFAS. The order also requires ITC to remove spilled material and take actions to prevent it from migrating farther downstream.
- Fourth, EPA is working to develop and implement a more robust surface water sampling plan that could include sampling for additional PFAS chemicals. The plan will rely on all available tools and methods to provide as much information to the public as possible about PFAS levels in local waterways.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has reported that drinking water provided by the local water utility is [HYPERLINK "https://www.tceq.texas.gov/news/releases/joint-release-unified-command-working-to-assess-water-quality-near-itc-site"] by the incident. TCEQ has also provided [HYPERLINK "https://www.tceq.texas.gov/news/releases/joint-release-unified-command-working-to-assess-water-quality-near-itc-site"] for Deer Park residents who use wells north of Texas 225 on testing their water before using.

EPA will continue to engage with the Unified Command throughout the response on any PFAS-related issues. On February 14, EPA released the PFAS Action Plan. This Action Plan represents EPA's approach to a national, multi-media, multi-program, research, management, and risk communication plan to address an emerging chemical of concern like PFAS.

Background

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) are working in Unified Command in response to a fire at the Intercontinental Terminals Company (ITC) Deer Park facility near Houston, TX. The Unified Command consists of EPA, TCEQ, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Harris County Pollution Control Services (HCPCS) and ITC. Emergency responders have extinguished the fires. EPA has conducted, and continues to conduct, ground level air monitoring with

hand held equipment and the Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology aircraft (ASPECT). The EPA Trace Atmosphere Gas Analyzer (TAGA) arrived in LaPorte and began analyzing on-the-ground air quality in the Deer Park area on March 21. It is monitoring for organic compounds in the air. EPA began collecting water samples in Tucker Bayou on March 20, 2019, and in Buffalo Bayou on March 21, 2019.

QUESTION 1: What are PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS, GenX, and many other chemicals. PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States since the 1940s. PFOA and PFOS have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals. Both chemicals are very persistent in the environment and in the human body – meaning they break down very slowly and they can accumulate over time. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects.

PFAS can be found in:

- **Food** packaged in PFAS-containing materials, processed with equipment that used PFAS, or grown in PFAS-contaminated soil or water.
- **Commercial household products**, including stain- and water-repellent fabrics, nonstick products (e.g., Teflon), polishes, waxes, paints, cleaning products, and fire-fighting foams (a major source of groundwater contamination at airports and military bases where firefighting training occurs).
- **Workplace**, including production facilities or industries (e.g., chrome plating, electronics manufacturing or oil recovery) that use PFAS.
- **Drinking water**, typically localized and associated with a specific facility (e.g., manufacturer, landfill, wastewater treatment plant, firefighter training facility).
- **Living organisms**, including fish, animals and humans, where PFAS have the ability to build up and persist over time.

Certain PFAS chemicals are no longer manufactured in the United States as a result of phase outs including the [HYPERLINK "https://www.epa.gov/assessing-and-managing-chemicals-under-tsca/risk-management-and-polyfluoroalkyl-substances-pfass" \l "tab-3"]in which eight major chemical manufacturers agreed to eliminate the use of PFOA and PFOA-related chemicals in their products and as emissions from their facilities. Although PFOA and PFOS are no longer manufactured in the United States, they are still produced internationally and can be imported into the United States in consumer goods such as carpet, leather and apparel, textiles, paper and packaging, coatings, rubber and plastics.

QUESTION 2: Why does it take so long to get sampling results on PFAS when Benzene are posted within 24 hours?

EPA is working with laboratories to process samples and provide the public with the results of the sampling as quickly as possibles. The time it takes for laboratories to analyze specific chemicals varies. The analytical methodology for PFAS is more complex and takes more time than the methodology for benzene. On average it should take approximately five days for the laboratory to process the samples. EPA will make the data available to the public immediately following receipt of the data from the laboratory.

QUESTION 3: EPA is sampling water and so is TCEQ, EDF and others. Why are the sampling results different?

The differences in reported concentrations are due to several factors. The location and time samples are collected, the sampling procedures followed, the analytical methods all contribute to the differences we see in concentration. For example, water samples taken a few feet away from each other may experience very different physical and chemical conditions depending on river or bayou bottom contours, currents, gradient and other factors.

QUESTION 4: What is EPA doing to address PFAS?

On February 14, 2019, EPA announced the first-ever PFAS Action Plan. This historic plan responds to extensive public interest and input the EPA has received, including at the agency's May 2018 National Leadership Summit and subsequent visits to a number of states across the nation. The Action Plan represents the first time the EPA has built a national, multi-media, multi-program, research, management, and risk communication plan to address an emerging chemical of concern like PFAS. The Action Plan identifies both short-term solutions for addressing PFAS chemicals and long-term strategies that will help provide the tools and technologies states, tribes, and local communities need to clean up sites and provide clean and safe drinking water to their residents. For additional information: [HYPERLINK "http://www.epa.gov/pfas"]